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# THE INTERNATIONALIST

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"Force, Violence and Dictatorship  
in the Class Struggle"

An analysis of the role of unions,  
factory councils, soviets, the re-  
volutionary party and the proletar-  
ian dictatorship.

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## "Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle"

The method of the class struggle has been accepted in words by many movements and different schools of thought in the course of nearly a century. The most widely differing interpretations have collided in violent polemics, reflections of events and turning points in the history of capitalism and the antagonisms it gives rise to.

The polemic which clarified in a classic manner from the period of the first world war and the Russian Revolution was that of Lenin and Trotsky and the groups of the Left later on gathered in the International of Moscow. They formulated the questions of force, violence, conquest of power, the State, and the dictatorship in a manner that one must consider as definitive in the realm of theory and program.

On the opposite side is witnessed the innumerable distortions of the opportunism of social-democracy. It is unnecessary to go into great detail at this point on the refutation of social-democratic opportunism. It may be useful however to emphasize a few issues which would serve to make better understood the conceptions which differentiate us from them. In addition, many of these false positions which were fought against at that time, and resulting in a rupture with them, seemed to have disappeared for good. On the contrary, they reappeared in nearly identical forms in the present situation of the workers' movement.

Revisionism pretends to demonstrate that all perspectives of revolutionary violence resulting from the collision between the working class and the defense of bourgeois democracy, is a null and void part of the marxist system. Falsifying and exploiting the texts, including a preface and a famous letter of Engels in which he stated that the whole perspective of victory of an armed insurrection was excluded because of the progress of military technique on the one hand, and on the other, the progress of trade unions and parliamentary parties foresaw in the next stage arrival at power by legal means without bloodshed.

They wish to create the illusion amongst the workers that the working class is unable to combat by force, the power of the capitalist class. They sow the illusion that the working class can realize socialism after having conquered the executive power of the state by obtaining a majority vote in the parliamentary institutions.

The Left Marxists were and are in turn accused of being a cult of violence; of

demanding sadism even where it is possible to avoid these and arrive at the same goal by peaceful roads.

But historic events are so eloquent, they speedily betray the real content of this polemic, which is not so much a mystique of non-violence as an apology for the bourgeois order.

After the armed revolution triumphed at Leningrad over the resistance of the Czarist organization and the Russian bourgeoisie, revisionism abandoned the argument that it is impossible to conquer power by arms for the argument, "we must not hold power, even if we have it". This position based itself on a humanitarianism in general, a stupid social-pacifism which repudiates the violence of the workers' revolution. It did not deny that the bourgeoisie used violence in its historic revolutions, even manifesting extreme terrorism. On the other hand, in all the controversies, in situations decisive for the socialist movement, the right wing was always opposed to direct action. It declared however, that for other aims it would accept recourse to insurrection. For example, the Italian reformist socialists in May 1915 were opposed to the proposal for a general strike at the moment of war mobilization. Their ideological and political arguments were not only on a tactical estimate of the relation of forces; but admitted that in case of military invasion by Austria and Germany, they would call the people to arms.

The same theoreticians of the "utilization" of legal and democratic methods pretend to recognize popular violence as legitimate and necessary whenever an attempt is made from the top to abolish constitutional guarantees. In that case how explain the progress of military technique in the hands of the State as no longer an insurmountable obstacle? How can one foresee in the case of peaceful conquest of power by a majority whether or not the class in power would use its military technique to preserve itself? How is the proletariat able to use a violence in all these situations, decried and condemned as a method of the class? The Social-Democrats do not know what to say, because they are purely and simply the accomplices for the conservation of the bourgeoisie.

In fact a system of tactical slogans such as theirs cannot be conciliated with an apology, clearly anti-marxist, for bourgeois civilization. In addition it consti-



tutes the foundation of the politics of parties carried on the misshapen trunk of anti-fascism (the united front, peoples' front etc.).

Their thesis is that the last historic example of violence and civil war is that which enabled the bourgeois order to establish itself on the ruins of feudal and despotic regimes. An era of civilized and peaceful struggles was on the contrary opened up with the conquest of political liberties, permitting the conquest of all the others, even of economic and social equality without violence and without bloodshed.

The historic movement of the modern proletariat and of socialism is no longer presented in these ignoble falsifications, as the most radical struggle of history, as the complete annihilation of capitalism on a world scale. (Annihilation of its economic, juridic, political and ideological institutions, still impregnated with untruths transmitted by preceding forms of oppression and which still poisons the air we breathe today).

For revisionism, socialism is reduced to a stupid melange of vague social postulates grafted to and transplanted on the trunk of the bourgeois system. In addition it hesitatingly pretends legal, constitutional conquests, for whom capitalism has enriched and enlightened society.

The formidable rival perspective of Marx, which measured in the social sub-soil the growing and irresistible pressures which must make the envelope of bourgeois forms of production explode, just as geologic cataclysms break the earth's crust is replaced by the contemptible falsehoods of a Roosevelt who introduced into the short-winded enumeration of bourgeois liberties, freedom from fear and freedom from need, or of Cardinal Pacelli who, having praised the maintenance of the eternal principle of property in modern capitalism, made the pretense of weeping over the abyss which separates the poverty of the multitude and the monstrous accumulation of riches.

Reviving revolutionary marxism, Lenin raised again the issue of the question of the State, defining it as a machine with which one class crushes the others. This is fully applicable above all to the modern bourgeois parliamentary democratic state.

Out of this historic polemic it was established above all that the working class cannot penetrate this machine nor use it for its own aims and that instead of conquering it, it must smash it and break it into pieces.

Out of this historic polemic it was established above all that the working class cannot penetrate this machine nor use it for its own aims and that instead of conquering it, it must smash it and break it into pieces.

The proletarian struggle is not a struggle for the interior of the State and its organisms, but a struggle outside of them, against them, against all their forms and manifestations.

The proletarian struggle does not aim to take over or conquer the State, like a fortress in which the victorious army installs itself, but destroys it, sweeping away its defenses and fortifications.

Yet, after this destruction, a form of political state is necessary. This is the new form of the organization of power of the proletarian class in face of the necessity to direct the employment of violence in order to eliminate the privileges of capital and to organize under new forms, non-private, non-commercial, the forces of production liberated from their chains.

This is why it is correct to speak of the conquest of Power, not a legal and peaceful conquest, but violent, armed, revolutionary. We speak readily of the passage of power from the hands of the bourgeoisie to the hands of the proletariat precisely because our doctrine calls Power not the authority and the law supported by the full weight of the past, but the dynamics of the force and violence directed toward the future and removing the obstacles of these institutions. It is not exact to speak of the Conquest of the State, or of the passage of the State under the direction of one class to that of another, because it is precisely a condition of the victory of the class that is ruled that the State of the class that rules perish and is destroyed. To violate this essential point of Marxism; to make the least concession to it, pretending for example, that the passage of power to the proletariat introduces itself as a parliamentary emergency even accompanied by street battles and a foreign war leads directly to conservatism of the extreme. This signifies that the State Apparatus is a form open to an opposite social content, that the State is above classes and their Historic struggle. This leads to a cowardly respect for legality and a vulgar apology for the established order.

What is in question is not only an error in scientific evaluation, but a real de-

generation unfolded under our very eyes when the so-called communist parties (stalinist) having turned their backs on the Theses of Lenin arrive at a coalition with the social-democratic traitors, in order to enable bourgeois democratic government to operate a servile and collaborationist doctrine.

With the clear thesis on the destruction of the State, Lenin reestablished that of the Proletarian State, not agreed to by the anarchists who have the merit of advocating the destruction of the State first, believing that as soon as bourgeois power is destroyed, all forms of organized power pass away. Thus they hold that the political State as such, that is, a system of social violence passes away. But since the transition from capitalist to socialist economy cannot be immediate, the suppression (of the non-laboring class cannot be a supposition) and cannot be realized without physically suppressing it. For the period during which the capitalist forms persist, altho undergoing an incessant retreat over an extended period of time, the organized revolutionary state must have, as Lenin had the right to say, in order to function, soldiers, police forces, and prisons.

With the progressive reduction of the sector of private economy, the necessity to apply the measures involved in political restraints becomes less and less. Then the State itself tends to a progressive disappearance.

The points recalled here schematically, suffice to prove how, not only a magnificent polemical campaign ridiculed and pulverized its opponents, but above all, how the greatest events of the class struggle brought out in all their clarity the classic theses of Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto, and the conclusion which they drew on the defeat of the Paris Commune; that is, on the Conquest of Political Power, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Despotic Intervention of the State in the bourgeois relations of production, and finally its withering away.

But it appears that we no longer are in the right to speak of a historic confirmation of this agreeable theoretic position when we arrive at the ultimate phase; which has not yet been witnessed in Russia nor elsewhere, that is, the withering away, the dissolution of the State (the "aufloesing" of Engels).

The question is important and difficult since for the dialectic it is not a question of a more or less brilliant succession of written or oral phrases never proved with certainty, but of conclusions unable to be founded on fact.

The bourgeois states, in all their different climates, are in process of increasing in a frightful manner under our very eyes. The sole state that a powerful propaganda presents as proletarian increases beyond all limits its organization, and its bureaucratic, judiciary, police and military functions.

It is unnecessary to be astonished therefore if the forecast of an elimination of the State once fraught with the decisive task in the struggle of classes, is received with general scepticism.

Vulgar opinion says to us: "You are always able to wait, you theoreticians and realizers of dictatorships, even red ones! The State as a tumor in the body of society will take care that society retrogresses. It will invade all its tissues and recesses until it chokes it to death!" It is this contemporary evaluation that gives courage to all the individualists, liberals, anarchists and finally to the hybrid and unformed species. These hesitate between the class struggle and liberalism and who propose socialisms based on nothing but Personality and plenitude of its expressions.

It is well known that even the small groups who in the communist camp have reacted against the opportunist degeneration of the International dissolved by Moscow, are hesitant on this point; preoccupied by the struggle against the stifling centralization of bureaucratic stalinism. They call into question the principled positions of Marxism reestablished by Lenin and they believe manifested in all that was revolutionary in the glorious period of 1917-1920--violated by worship of the State.

It is necessary here to state clearly and energetically that the current of the Italian Left, with which this publication is connected has no hesitation, nor the least compunction in repelling and rejecting all revision of the fundamental principles of Marx and Lenin, to whom the revolution is a violent process par excellence, and is to a supreme degree an authoritarian, totalitarian and centralizing fact.

The condemnation of the stalinist orientation is not founded on abstract accusation of a scholastic and "constitutionalist" nature. According to us what was violated by the abuses of bureaucratism, rule by decree and despotism, is part of other evaluations which concern the economic, social and political development of Russia and the world, of which the monstrous growth of the State is not the catas-



trophic cause but the inevitable result.

The hesitation to accept and defend openly the dictatorship out of stupid and vague moral considerations; on the pretended right of the individual or group not to be forced to submit to a force more vast, flows from a confusion without a doubt between the dictatorship of one class against another and that of the relationships of organization and power within the victorious working class constituting the revolutionary State.

Once reestablished in their correct terms we would wish these given fundamentals to be the result. (This study certainly does not pretend to settle the question that only history can resolve, as, for us the problem of the necessity of violence in the conquest of power is put on the agenda). But the task of the theoretic school and the cadres of militants of the party, is to avoid, in searching for a solution, the use of arguments dictated or influenced by enemy ideologies and therefore by the interests of the opposed class.

The dictatorship is the second and dialectic aspect of revolutionary force. In the first stage of the conquest of power, it operated from below and mobilizes forces of thousands in the attempt to smash the established state form. After the victory, this same class force continues to operate in a reverse sense, that is, from the top, in the exercise of power intrusted to a State organism reconstituted in whole or in part, yet more robust, more decisive, and if necessary, more pitiless and terroristic than the preceding one.

The protests against the demands of the dictatorship - that of the prison regime of Moscow who themselves double-talk hypocritically today; the cries of alarm against the pretended impossibility of curbing the appetite for power and material privileges of the bureaucratic personnel crystallized into a new ruling class, all this agrees perfectly with the inferior and metaphysical position of those who treat society and the State as abstract entities without understanding that the heart of the problem is found in the facts of production, and, in the transformations which give rise to the collision of classes.

It is therefore banal to confuse the dictatorship that we Marxists lay claim to, with the vulgar concept of tyranny, despotism and autocracy.



Confusing therefore, the dictatorship of the proletariat with personal power and believed to have been conferred on Lenin, as on Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin constitute the same type of stupidities consequently.

Let us state that the marxist analysis disowns completely the contention that States operate under the action of the will of contemporary Feuhrers. These are nothing but the recognizable symbols, pieces broken on the chessboard of history by forces they were unable to escape.

In addition we have well established once for all that the bourgeois ideologists have no right to be scandalized at Franco or Tito and the energetic methods used by the states of which they are the head, when they refuse to apologize for the dictatorship and terror to which the bourgeoisie had recourse to precisely after having taken power. This is the case whether or not the well-meaning historian classes Guisseppi Garibaldi, dictator of Naples in 1860, as among the political criminals, or exalts him on the contrary as an unadulterated champion of the people.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is not expressed in the power of one man, even if endowed with exceptional personal qualities.

Has the proletarian dictatorship therefore, a political party for its acting agent, operating in the name and for the interest of the working class? To this question we answer as our political current has for 30 years. Our answer is unconditionally, Yes!

Inasmuch as it is undeniable that the parties claiming to represent the proletariat have undergone profound crises, split and divided repeatedly, it will be demanded of us, in face of an answer just as determined, if it is possible and according to what criteria how to determine which party possesses this revolutionary prerogative. With this we agree, on the question of an organism whose relationship relies on the broad base of the class; an organism most controlled and well defined which is the party.

In answering this point, we must not lose sight of the distinct character of the dictatorship, which, as always in our method, as long as its positive aspects have not been revealed in historically concrete terms, is defined in its negative aspect.

Is the dictatorship, the regime in which the defeated class, although existing

physically and constituting from the statistical viewpoint a notable part of society, is held by force outside the State, and in addition unable to attempt the reconquest of power because of the lack of propaganda due to the impossibility to dispose of a press?

Who will maintain it in this state of subjection? It is unnecessary to force this class to depart from the arena of struggle. The unrolling of the historic struggle itself will teach it how to.

If the class we fight is reduced to this state of social inferiority and undergoes this civil death before disappearing into mere statistics, we will permit the acting agent to be the completely social victorious majority, (an absolute, and unrealizable) or else a part of it, or a solid group of the vanguard (numerically even a minority) or finally, during a brief crisis, down to only one man (another extreme hypothesis, realized in only one historic example, that of Lenin who in April 1917, discovered the new line of the history of the party and the revolution in the events, and acted on them. One, against the whole central committee and the old bolsheviks. They consequently in a majority, abandoned their old thesis completely, and in November dispersed the Constituent assembly with red soldiers.)

The marxist method being neither revelation, prophecy nor scholasticism, consists in, above all, knowing the sense in which the historic forces act, in establishing in their relationships and contradictions. It determines successively, with research and struggle, the character of phenomena and the hammering out of the methods.

The Paris Commune confirmed that the proletarian force must smash the old state and not penetrate it; that the method to employ must not be legality, but insurrection.

The defeat of the working class in this episode of its struggle, and the victory of October at Leningrad proved that it is necessary to organize a new form of armed state, the Secret of which resides in this:- to deny political survival to the members of the defeated class and its various parties.

The decisive secret once forced on history (permit us, for the sake of facilitating clarity, to flirt with this expression) has not been studied by us, or elucidated as far as the psychology of the dynamics of the new organism is concerned. Consequently a thorny domain still remains open in front of us, unfortunately. The do-

main of its pathology.

Above all things, the negative character determined by it, it is the exclusion of the defeated class from the state whatever the institutions presented:--(legislative executive, judicial, administrative). This radically distinguishes our State from the bourgeois State that claims to include all the social classes in its organs.

But this innovation, perhaps, does not appear absurd to the defeated bourgeoisie. Because when they reunited to save the old State based on the order of the nobility and clergy, they understood they made an error when they contented themselves with merely protesting the entrance of the Third Estate into the statified organization. Under the Convention and the Terror (French Revolution) they drove out the Nobility and Clergy from the State and made it easy to close historically the dictatorial phase in the degree in which there occurred the rapid destruction of the privileges of the two other orders based on judicial prerogatives rather than on the organization of production, reducing the clergy and nobility to the rank of simple citizens.

In the remainder of this article, we will examine, having already defined the historic form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the relations existing between the different organisms that constitute the dictatorship of the proletariat; the party, soviets, unions, factory committees.

In other words, we will discuss the problem of the so-called proletarian democracy, which must institute itself after the dictatorship has historically buried bourgeois democracy. For which the formula was introduced in the documents of the Third International, but which it has effectively liquidated.

The difficult problem of the degeneration of workers' power may be denoted along the following broad, general lines.

In one large country, the working class conquered power on the historic line of the armed insurrection and the annihilation of the influence of classes overthrown by the proletarian dictatorship. But in the other countries of the world, the working class did not have the strength to begin the revolutionary attack or were crushed in the attempt. In these countries power rested with the bourgeoisie, production and exchange continues to develop within the framework of capitalism, which dominates the



relations of the world market.

In the country of the revolution, the dictatorship held up well in the political and military sphere against all attempts at counter-attack. In a few years the civil war was terminated victoriously. Foreign capitalism did not engage in any general action to destroy it.

However, a process of internal degeneration of the new administrative and political apparatus set in:- the formation of a privileged circle which monopolized the benefits and the administrative posts, while continuing to proclaim itself the representative and defender of the interests of the great working masses.

Externally, the revolutionary workers' movement, closely connected to this political hierarchy, not only did not realize any new victories over the bourgeois state, but lost the sense of its own proper action, progressively falsified, and pursued other aims of a non-revolutionary character.

Facing this terrible problem of the history of the class struggle, a grave question is posed:- how was it able or how was it possible to prevent this double catastrophe?

The question is in reality badly posed; according to the correct method of Marxism, it is necessary, on the contrary, To Individualize the Real Characteristics, and at the Proper Time, this Process of Degeneration. Finally to Establish when and how one can recognize the Conditions For a Revolutionary Process, Saved from this Pathological Retrogression in the Rear.

We are not then for returning to the position of those who dispute the existence of a degeneration in Russia, and who hold that there is at bottom a real revolutionary workers' power in Russia, and that there exists a coordination with the parties of the proletariat abroad, enabling it to go toward the annihilation of world capitalism.

But at this point we do not wish any longer to study the socio-economic problem, which must be based on a serious analysis of the Russian mechanism of production and distribution, and its real relations with the Capitalist economies on the outside.

Here, in terms of our historic expose on the problems of violence and power, we wish to answer certain objections, according to which the degeneration, in the sense

of an oppressive bureaucracy, originated directly in the fact that they violated the principles of elective democracy.

This objection has two aspects, but the less radical is the most insidious. The first aspect is openly bourgeois. It attaches itself directly to the world campaign of defamation of the Russian Revolution, lead from the first, by all the liberals and social-democrats, who were terrorized above all, by the magnificent and courageous proclamation of the theory of the method of the revolutionary dictatorship which was its application.

After all that has been said in this study, we consider as refuted, this aspect of democratic lamentations. This does not prevent the struggle against them from being of first importance. Today, precisely the conformist demand for that which Lenin called "democracy in general", is brandished shamelessly, precisely by the parties connected with the regime in Power in Russia (and which in the fundamental texts of Communism, represents the dialectic opposition, actually the negation of the revolutionary position). This regime, although it grants internally the formal right of dangerous and criminal concessions to the bourgeois democratic mechanism, not only remains, but tends to become, always more strictly, a totalitarian and police regime.

One should therefore never insist on the critique of democracy in all the forms known till now. This has always been the mode of internal organization of an old or new class of oppressors, an old or new technique in the problem secondary to the relationships between elements and groups of exploiters. In the properly bourgeois revolutions, it was the atmosphere necessary for the exuberant affirmation of capitalism.

The old democracies, based on the principles of elections, assemblies, parliaments, councils of doctors and prelates, deceitfully pretend the well being of all; emphasize the spiritual against the material conquests; but in fact imposes and maintains the exploitation of a mass of enslaved, helots; people who are crushed because of being less aggressive or warlike, who are far removed, outside of temple, senate etc

In the many banal theories of equal rights, we read in reality the compromise, the accord and the conspiracy between the members of the privileged to maintain them-

selves at the expense of the lower classes.

Our evaluation of the modern form of democracy based on the sacred charters of the English, American and French revolutions is no different. They are nothing but the technique to realize better conditions of oppression and capitalist exploitation over the workers. If it has replaced the old system of feudal oppressions which suffocated the bourgeoisie, it always had the aim of exploitation itself, in a new and different fashion, but not less nor weaker.

In this regard, the interpretation of the present phase of bourgeois totalitarianism, in which having achieved its historic role, the parliamentary forms tend to disappear and the atmosphere of capitalism becomes anti-liberal, and anti-democratic. That is fundamental. Therefore the tactic which demands the return of bourgeois democracy is contrary to the interests of the working class, reactionary and even anti-progressive from the start. But let us return to the second aspect of the objection of the democratic camp, which is no longer an inspired dogma of democracy above and between the classes, but which says in essence: "It is all very well to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and surmount all scruples in the repression of the vanquished bourgeois minority; but once the bourgeois minority was put outside the law in Russia, there was brought about the degeneration of the State because within the victorious working class the rule of representation was violated: if it had established a true system of proletarian organs at the base (councils, unions, political parties) following the principle of elections and majority rule, the true revolutionary voice would have been saved and would have removed the danger of the abusive and stifling domination of the 'ignoble Stalinist clique'".

At the bottom of this loose way of seeing things is the opinion according to which each individual on the sole foundation that he belongs to an economic class, that he finds himself in the relations of production and its effects common to many other individuals, must acquire from these conditions a clear class consciousness. That is to say, an ensemble of opinions reflecting the historic road and future welfare of his class. This is a mistaken way of understanding marxist determinism. The formation of consciousness is certainly connected to economic conditions at bottom. But the consciousness lags behind the conditions, and is therefore much more limited.



For example, the bourgeoisie, the tradesmen, the bankers and the small factories existed and fulfilled their fundamental economic tasks several centuries in advance of a fully developed historic consciousness of the bourgeois class. They had a psychology of servants and accessories to the feudal lords, while in their midst was formed slowly an ideology and a revolutionary tendency. The minority organized themselves audaciously to attempt the conquest of power.

The great democratic revolutions realized this conquest. But if some aristocrat struggled for the revolution, many of the bourgeoisie kept a manner of thought and line of action contrary to the general interests of their class, which was militantly struggling against the counter-revolutionary parties.

The same is true of the opinions and consciousness of the workers. It is formed much under the conditions of toil, but surrounded by the whole traditional, conservative ideology in the environment of the capitalist world.

This influence grows increasingly in the present period. Is it necessary to point out what resources capitalism has in the planning of propaganda with modern techniques, and the centralized intervention into economic life with the adoption of an infinite number of reformist measures and decrees which attempt to satisfy the secondary interests of the toilers and often have really a concrete effect on their wages and conditions of life?

The old aristocratic and feudal regimes acted upon the naissant bourgeoisie above all through the school and culture over which they had the monopoly, supporting themselves through the church, the creator of servile ideologies, upon the rough and uncultivated state of the masses. This bourgeoisie had to go through a great ideological struggle, with complicated alternatives, that literature presented as a struggle for liberty of thought. What was at stake at that time was the question of the superstructure of a conflict between two forces organized to crush one another.

Today, world capitalism, in addition to church and school, has thousands of other forms of ideological manipulation and means of forming what is called "consciousness". It has qualitatively and quantitatively passed beyond the old regimes in the fabrication of falsehoods, not only in the sense in which it circulates the most absurd doctrines and mystiques, but informs the masses in a most distorted manner about in-

numerable events in the complexity of modern life.

Unfortunately, this formidable armament of our class enemy enables it to form within the oppressed class an opposite ideology and doctrine, which always becomes more clear and modifies itself to the degree that the economic development aggravates the conflict of productive forces, developed during hard struggles against the interests of the working class. This perspective is not founded on the argument that the workers being more numerous than the bourgeoisie, the accumulation of their opinions and individual conceptions would prevail over that of its adversaries.

We have always said this clarity and consciousness is not formed in an amorphous collection of isolated individuals, but in organizations arising within the undifferentiated mass, in decisive minorities, which united in one country or the other and situated in the historic continuity of the movement, assumes the function of direction of the struggle of the masses. At that point then, those participating in the struggle for economic motives until recently, reunite the force and clarity of opinions, crystallizing them in the leading party.

This is why it is not excluded that an elective consultation of the working class made in general with the arithmetic measuring rod, would give a counter-revolutionary result, even in a situation favorable for a struggle and advance guided by the minority, of the vanguard. Even a general struggle which concludes with the victorious conquest of power is insufficient to eliminate in the immediate, the complicated transitional influences of bourgeois ideologies. These not only survive in the whole social structure of the country of the revolution itself, but continue to operate beyond the frontier, thanks to the imposing modern means at the disposal of the bourgeoisie that we have mentioned.

It does not suffice to destroy, at the same time as the state machine, all the organs of ideological planning from the past, such as the Church, school and other innumerable associations. It does not suffice to establish a central control of all the great means of propaganda:- press, radio, theatre, etc... These measures must be completed economically and socially, with the possibility of passing rapidly and with success to the abolition of bourgeois forms of production. Lenin knew very well that the necessity of allowing to survive and in a certain sense to consolidate itself

(the family administration of petty agricultural enterprises) meant abandoning this sector to the egotistic mercantile psychology of a bourgeois type; to the defeatist propaganda of the Pope, to leave play the innumerable counter-revolutionary superstitions. But, the state of the relation of forces leaves no other choice. It is only in conserving the strength and solidity of the armed power of the industrial proletariat that would make possible the conciliation and the use of the revolutionary spirit of peasant allies against the obstacle of the feudal agrarian regime and defense against the danger of an eventual uprising of half enriched peasants. This was confirmed in the civil war against Denikin and Kolchak.

The false position of those who wish to apply arithmetic democracy within the toiling mass and its organizations has its source in the false interpretation of being determining consciousness (Marxist determinism).

We have already made very clear the distinction between the erroneous thesis, according to which in each historic epoch, there corresponds to classes defending themselves from opposed interests, groups professing opposition theories, and the accurate thesis which we point out to the effect that in each historic epoch the theoretical system constructed on the basis of the interests of the dominant class tend to be defended by the class that is dominated, to the advantage of the ruling class. He who is serf in body is serf in spirit. The old bourgeois lie is still to wish to begin with the liberation of the spirit. This leads up a blind alley and costs privilege nothing, at a time when it is the liberation of the body that is necessary.

The same, apropos of the famous problem of consciousness, it is false to conceive it as the following series of cause and effects:- economic cause determining-class consciousness--class action.

The process is the reverse: economic causes determining...class action...class consciousness. The class consciousness comes at the end, and in general, after the decisive victory.

Economic necessity concentrates the pressure and efforts of all those who are oppressed and stifled by the forms crystallized in a given system of production. They strive to break through these limits. It is in the course of the struggle of



coming up against these limits that their general understanding of conditions is enlarged, and thus there is formed in their heads a clear vision of the laws of development, principles and problems of their class.

For dozens of years, we have been reproached for wanting a revolution of the unconscious.

We reply that we must see to it that the revolution sweeps away the pile of infamies accumulated by the bourgeois regime. We must break the formidable circle of institutions which oppress and mutilate the life of the productive masses. We are not worried about all the blows being borne by the rank-and-file still unconscious of the issues of the struggle.

But we marxists of the Left have always emphasized with cleanness and vigour the importance of the theoretic part of the movement. We have constantly denounced the treachery and absence of principle by the opportunists of the right.

We have always maintained the validity of the marxist conception which considers the proletariat as the real inheritor of classic modern philosophy. This affirmation signifies, that parallel to the struggle of bourgeois usurers, colonists and merchants history saw the assault by the critical method on the ideologies of divine right and a revolution in natural philosophy which apparently preceded the social revolution. This was due to the fact that the scholastic and theocratic edifice of the middle ages was <sup>not</sup> the easiest obstacle to overthrow by the productive forces of capitalism seeking to assert itself. But the bourgeoisie, having become conservative after its political and social victory, had no interest in the arm of the critique, after having used it against the untruths of Christian cosmogony, being occupied with another pressing and human problem, that of the social structure.

This new task in the progress of theoretic consciousness of society devolved on a new class, forced by its interests to debunk the falsehoods of bourgeois civilization. This new class, in the dominant dialectic vision of Marx, was the "wretched artisans", excluded from culture by medieval prejudice and precedent and whom the liberal revolution failed to raise to equal status. This was the class of manual laborers of heavy industry, unpolished and all but ignorant.

The key to our system resides precisely in the fact that it is not the individual

that is considered as the basis of this clarification. On the contrary, we know that in most cases the elements of the mass flung into the struggle are unable to have in their heads the elements of a general theoretic outlook. To demand such a condition would be purely illusory and counter-revolutionary. This role assumes, on the contrary, not groups of superior individuals sent to do good to humanity, but an organism, differentiated within the mass, utilizing the individuals as the cells which compose the tissues, and the elevation to that of a function impossible without this complex of relationships. This organism, this system, this complex of component parts, of which each has its proper function, is the organism of the class. It is analogous to the animal organism in which concurrently are systems of very complicated tissues, vessels, etc.

It is the Party, which to a certain degree, Determines the Class Front at the Same Time as it renders it capable of making its own History.

This whole process is reflected in different ways in different individuals, who come as they see fit, to the class. That is why we ourselves are not astonished, for example, to find in a given circumstance, the revolutionary and conscious worker, who is still completely victim of conservative political influence, or even enrolled in the ranks of adversaries knowing the opportunist versions of the movement etc.

And we draw no automatic conclusion from a statistical elective consultation, if that were really possible - to these workers we say nothing is settled by casting a numerical vote by the members of the working class for the different possible positions.

It is only too well established that the class party, before and after taking power is susceptible of degenerating in its function as a revolutionary instrument.

It is necessary to look for the causes of this grave phenomena of social pathology, as well as the remedies fit to combat it. But before results are achieved in this domain, we reject recourse to that which consists in a search for a guarantee and a control of the orientation of the party in elective consultations, whether among the militants of the party itself, or in the larger circle of workers coming to the economic organizations of the unions, to factory organisms or even to organs of a

politically representative type, such as the soviets or workers councils.

In practice, the history of the movement demonstrates that such a solution never leads to any good. It has never averted the disastrous victories of opportunism. In all the conflicts of tendencies of which the traditional Socialist parties were the arena before the war of 1914-1918, the revisionists of the right always were strengthened against the radical Marxists of the Left in claiming to have contact with larger masses of workers than the limited circles under the direction of the party.

In fact, opportunism, above all, supported itself on the parliamentary leaders, who violated the political directives of the party and demanded an autonomy in order to have power to collaborate with the bourgeois parties, with the excuse they were elected by all the proletarians, many more in number than the workers in the party, and who therefore designated their political direction. The same with the union leaders who on the economic plane practised the same class collaboration as the parliamentarians on the political plane. They also showed themselves recalcitrant to the discipline of the party, with the excuse that they represented all the workers economically organized and much more numerous than the party militants. The parliamentary cretins and the union high priests did not hesitate, while they carried on an alliance with capitalism, which culminated in their support of the war, to bring into disrepute the groups which struggled for sound class politics within the party. In the meantime the revenue from intellectuals and even now and then from non-proletarians, made a farce of laborism or proletarianism.

But there is still another proof of the fact that recourse to a pure and simple direct representation of the workers, does not lead to any Left solutions or to the preservation of a revolutionary orientation: it is the history of the school of Sorelist (Sorel) syndicalism which at a certain moment appeared certain to establish a real Counter-balance to the degeneration of the social-democratic parties who were lurching on the road of rejection of direct action or class violence. The marxist groups, which until fused in the Third International, justly criticized and condemned the syndicalist orientation, accusing it of abandoning the belief in a class unity capable of going beyond the narrowness of isolated crafts and limited conflicts for economic demands, for which, unfortunately, the method of physically violent means of



struggle, lead to a rejection of the revolutionary marxist position for which the whole class struggle is political and for which the indispensable organ is the party.

The correctness of this theoretical polemic was confirmed by the fact that revolutionary syndicalism itself was shipwrecked in the crisis of the war and passed into the ranks of social-patriotism of the different countries.

But this they play-down, as well as the action of the party the day after the revolutionary victory, and the most salient facts of the Russian Revolution, from which we ourselves have the experience to draw the lessons and to which we bring the greatest clarity.

We oppose the position according to which the disastrous degeneration of leninist revolutionary politics down to Stalinism actually had its origin in the excessive predominance of the party and its central committee over the other associations of the working class. We are opposed to the illusory position according to which all the degenerative processes would have been arrested at the beginning if they had consulted by elections the important political changes of the proletarian regime. One cannot confront this problem without connecting it first of all to the socio-economic function of different organisms in the process of distribution, of the traditional economy and in the construction of the new.

The unions constitute without any doubt, and have constituted for a long period a fundamental plane of struggle for the development of the revolutionary energies of the proletariat. But this has met with the possibility of success only when the party seriously worked in their midst to remove their effort from secondary petty aims to the general aims of the working class.

The craft union, even evolving toward the industrial union, is limited to the degree in which there exists differences of interests between the different trades or regroupments of workers. And these limits accentuate themselves to the degree that society and the capitalist state passes from prohibition of unions and strikes to tolerance of autonomous union organization and finally to their conquest and imprisonment in the bourgeois system.

But even in a regime of the proletarian dictatorship, one is unable any longer to think of the union as an organ representing in the definite and original sense the in-

terests of the workers. Even in this social phase, conflicts of interests between the different trades exist. But the fundamental point is that the workers have no right to use the union as long as the workers' power is forced to tolerate temporarily and in certain sectors, the presence of employers. In proportion to the progress of socialism these disappear. We do not conceive Socialism to be the State employer in substitution for the private employer. Even if, in the transition period such is the relationship, we must accept the principle that in the supreme interests of revolutionary politics, the workers' unions must always carry on their economic pressure against the State dispenser of work.

Without going further in this important analysis, we believe we have explained why we Left Communists, do not admit that the degree of unionization, and decisions in revolutionary politics, is dependent on agreement reached by an elective consultation of the principle of majority rule.

Let us deal now with the factory committees. We recall that this form of economic organization, at first considered much more radical than the union, saw its claims of revolutionary dynamics constantly fall flat, since it has become generally accepted by all the political currents, including the fascist current. The conception which sees in the factory committee an organ participating in control at first, then in administration of production, in order finally to conquer it in its totality, factory by factory, reveals itself as openly collaborationist, as a new path no less ineffectual than the old syndicalism, preventing the channelization of the masses toward the great united struggle for power. The polemic on this question had a great echo in the young communist parties when the Russian Bolsheviks were forced to take essential and even draconian measures to struggle against the tendency of workers to render autonomous the administrative and economic technique of the factory in which they worked. A thing which not only prevented the establishment of a socialist plan, but threatened gravely the output of the productive apparatus, on which the counter-revolutionaries tended to speculate. In fact, even more than the union, the factory committee acts as representative of very narrow, limited interests and is susceptible of coming into contradiction with the general interests of the working class.

But for another reason, the factory committee is no longer a fundamental and de-

finitive organ of the proletarian regime. When a truly communist economy will have been established in the given sectors of production and distribution, that is, when we have passed beyond the simple expulsion of the employer from industry, and beyond the administration by the State, it will be precisely this type of factory enterprise by factory enterprise type of economy which must disappear. Once the mercantile aspect of production passes away, the local establishment will no longer be a technical difficulty of the general system rationally directed with united solutions. The factory will no longer be the balance from income and outgo, and will therefore no longer be a factory enterprise, since at the same time the producer will cease to be a wage earner.

The factory committee therefore has natural limits of functioning, like the union, which prevents it from being to the very end the real ground for the cultivation and preparation of the proletarian class, and enables it to struggle only until the class reaches the limited aims of these organs. For this reason, these economic organisms are incapable of being used as an example to prove whether or not the party which holds the State power has more or less deviated from the fundamental historic line.

There now remains to examine the new organism revealed by the October Revolution:- the Soviets of workers, peasants, and soldiers also, at the beginning.

Undoubtedly, it is confirmed that it represents a new constitutional type opposed to the traditional type of bourgeois power. The system of soviets, therefore, down to the last village to arrive, with its successive horizontal layers, up to the summits of state direction is characterized by the fact that all members of the old possessing classes are excluded. It forms therefore the organized expression of the proletarian dictatorship. On the other hand, it has the other characteristic of reuniting in its hands all the representative and executive powers and also in theory, the judiciary. It operates consequently as a perfect mechanism of internal democracy for the working class. This discovery eclipsed the traditional parliament of bourgeois liberalism.

But since socialism left its utopian phase, all marxists know that it is not the invention of a constitutional formula which suffices to distinguish the great social types and great historic epochs. Constitutional structures are transitory reflections

of relationships of force. They do not derive universal principles by perversion to an 'inherent' mode of state organization.

The Soviets are effectively, the fundamental basis of the organs of the class. Not, as has been believed, combinations of corporative or trades representation. Accordingly they do not present limitations which affect the purely economic organizations. The importance of the Soviets, for us, resides in the fact that they are organs of struggle and this, to us, is related to the history of their real development, rather than fixed models of structure that we seek to interpret.

It was therefore an essential stage of the revolution, when the Soviets arrayed themselves against the Constituent Assembly of the bourgeois democracy and which the Bolshevik power, in dispersing the parliamentary assembly by force, raised the historic slogan of "All Power to the Soviets". But all this does not suffice to make us accept the opinion that such a class representation eliminates fluctuation in the composition of its representation. It was confirmed that at no matter what moment of difficult struggle conducted internally or externally by the revolution, the elections of Soviets was an expedient for resolving at their source all questions and even of avoiding counter-revolutionary degeneration.

This organism described a very complex cycle, which in the most optimistic hypotheses must end with its disappearance at the same time that the State will disappear. But for this same reason, it is necessary to admit that the Soviet mechanism as a whole, even as it is susceptible of being a powerful revolutionary instrument, fell as well, under counter-revolutionary influences. In conclusion we do not believe in any constitutional immunizing against this danger, which is uniquely dependent on the internal and world development of the social relationship of forces.

One may object here that, wishing to establish the predominance of the revolutionary party (which includes only a minority of the class) over all the other forms of organization, we seem to think that the party is eternal or must survive until the disappearance of the State of which Engels spoke.

We do not wish to discuss here the future transformation of the party into a simple organ of research and social study, coinciding with the great organisms of

scientific research of the new society: it is a phenomena analogous to the disappearance of the State which in the Marxist definition is transformed in effect into a great technical administration always of a more and more rational nature.

The distinctive character of the party is derived precisely from its organic nature. One does not join it because of its constitutional position in the frame of the economy or society. One is not automatically a militant of the party on the sole fact of being proletarian, elector or citizen etc.

According to the jurists, one joins the party by free, individual initiative. We Marxists say one joins the party, always due to the fact of a new determination of social relationships, but which must be connected in a general way to the most universal characteristics of the class party, its presence in all parts of the inhabited world, its comprehensive composition of elements in all categories and enterprises, of workers, and even non-workers, the continuity of its role in the successive stages of propaganda, organization, struggle conquest and construction of a new regime.

Amongst the proletarian organs, it is therefore the political party which is the least effected by the limits of structure and function, which, permitting anti-proletarian influences to grow, cause the malady of opportunism, making it their policy. And since, as we have admitted many times in our premise, this danger exists equally for the party, the conclusion is, we must not look for its defense in its subordination to other class organisms that it represents; a subordination that has been demanded many times with wretched unprincipledness, and occasionally, for the naive reason that these organisms include a great number of workers.

Our interpretation of the question extends equally to the famous demand for democracy in the party, according to which the errors of the leadership (of which we have not had too many disastrous examples) must be avoided or corrected by getting agreement of opinion by the rank-and-file militants of the party.

This does not signify that we think the root of the degeneration of the Communist Party is the fact that its assemblies and congresses did not raise their voices in face of the line initiated by the center.

We have witnessed a counter-revolutionary stifling of the ranks by the leadership as well as the turnings of history. The most ferocious methods have been used by the



machinery of the State to reach this aim. More than its origin, it has been the inevitable manifestation of the corruption of the party under the pressure of counter-revolutionary influences.

The position of the Left Communists on this is to call it the question of "revolutionary guarantees", and is above all that there does not exist any constitutional or contractual guarantees, although the party is differentiated from other organisms due to the fact that it is a contractual organism (however, not in the legalistic sense nor even in the sense meant by Jean Jacques Rousseau).

At the foundation of the relation between the individual militant and the party is a pledging (mutual dedication). We have of this mutual pledging the conception, that for us, in order to clear away the antipathetical term, "contractual", we define simply as dialectical. The relation is twofold. It is a twofold current flowing in opposite directions, from the center to the base, and from the base to the center. If the action defined by the center responds to a healthy functioning of this dialectic relationship, it will meet with a healthy response at the base in the rank and file.

The famous problem of discipline consists therefore in presenting to the rank-and-file militants at the base a system of limits which are in turn the intelligent translation of limits imposed on the action of the leadership. This is why we have always emphasized that these must not have the possibility, at the time of important changes of the political situation, of discovering, of inventing and of creating an assimilation among the ranks at the base, of pretended new principles, new forms, new rules for the action of the party. Because it is in surprises of this sort that is accomplished the historic shame of the treachery of opportunism. When this crisis bursts out, internal struggles unfold, precisely because the party is not an automatic instrument. The divisions of tendencies, and the splits are in this case a useful process, as the fever which frees the organism of its malady. Statutorily, however, we cannot admit them, encourage them or tolerate them.

Therefore there do not exist any recipes or rules to prevent the party from falling into the crises of opportunism, or of reacting by the establishment of factions. But the experience of the proletarian struggle over many decades enables us to establish certain conditions permitting avoidance. Our movement has the task of research,

defense, and of realizing the following untiringly.

They are:-

1- The party must defend and affirm the great clarity and continuity in communist theory as it developed itself in the course of successive applications to historic events which were facts. One must not consent to proclamations of principle even in partial contradiction to its fundamental theory.

2- The party must in every historic situation proclaim openly the complete content of its economic, social and political program. Above all, in that which is concerned the question of power, of its conquest by armed force, of its exercise by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The degeneration of dictatorships into a regime of privilege for a limited layer of bureaucracy and praetorian guards is itself always masked behind hypocritical love of the people, at present of a democratic and nationalistic character. It has always claimed the complete support of the popular masses, whereas the revolutionary party does not hesitate to declare its intention to attack the State and its institutions and to hold the vanquished class underfoot despotically, even when it admits that only an advanced minority of the oppressed class has arrived at an understanding of the necessities of the struggle.

The Communist Manifesto says, "The Communists disdain to hide their aims."

Those who boast of having them cleverly hidden are nothing but renegades from Communism.

3- The party must observe a strictness in the question of organization in that it does not accept enlarging itself by compromise with groups or grouplets or worse still to conclude bargains (agreements) for the conquest of new followers, from below, against the concessions of would be leaders and their directives.

4- The party must struggle for a clear historic understanding of the antagonistic meaning of the struggle. The communists demand the initiative in the assault on a world scale against institutions and traditions. They are known to be a menace to all privilege and call the masses to struggle for the offensive and not the defense against the pretended danger of loss of advantages gained within capitalism. The communists do not lend or lease their party for causes which are not theirs, for nor-

proletarian objectives such as liberty, nation, democracy and other similar falsehoods.

"The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains."

The communists denounce the whole debauchery of tactical expediency which is used with the excuse of speeding up the joining by large masses outside of the revolutionary program.

These expedients are political compromise, the alliance with other parties, the united front, the different formulas on the State utilized as ersatz for the dictatorship of the proletariat, such as workers' and peasants' government, workers and farmers' government, workers' council government, progressive democratic popular government etc.

The Communists see in these the principal conditions for the dissolution of the Communist movement and the degeneration of the Soviet Communist regime, i.e. precisely in the use of these tactical means. They (the genuine Communists) consider those who continue to defend this arsenal of opportunist tactics, while deploring the disease of Stalinist opportunism, as more dangerous than the Stalinists themselves.

Translated from Prometeo, theoretical organ of Internationalist Communist Party of Italy.

Taken from L'Internationaliste, theoretical organ of the F.F.G.C.I. (French Fraction of the Left Communist International).